

China Handbook Series

SPORTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING



CHINA HANDBOOK SERIES

SPORTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Compiled by
the *China Handbook* Editorial Committee
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体育卫生

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EDITOR'S NOTE

More than 30 years have elapsed since the birth of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. "How, really, is China today?" many people abroad wish to know. To answer this question, we plan to compile and publish a voluminous *China Handbook*, in which we intend to introduce the New China in every field of its activities. Emphasis will be on the process of development during the past three decades, the accomplishments, and the problems that still remain. The book will contain accurate statistics and related materials, all of which will be ready references for an interested reader.

To enhance the usefulness of the forthcoming volume, we plan to publish 10 major sections separately at first, so that we shall have an opportunity to take into consideration the opinions of our readers before all the composite parts are put together, revised and published as one volume. These separate sections are:

- Geography
- History
- Politics
- Economy
- Education and Science
- Literature and Art
- Sports and Public Health
- Culture

Life and Lifestyle
Tourism

Here, we wish particularly to point out the following:

First, the statistics listed in each separate book exclude those of Taiwan, unless otherwise indicated.

Second, the statistics are those compiled up to the end of 1980.

The *China Handbook* Editorial Committee

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Chapter One

SPORTS

1. DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICAL CULTURE AND SPORTS IN NEW CHINA

Sports in old China — to the extent they existed — were the domain of the wealthy while most people suffered from poor health, making the metaphor applied to the whole Chinese people of the time, “the sickmen of East Asia”. In competitive sports, not one Chinese name can be found among top world class athletes or world record holders of that era.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 brought fundamental changes to sports as it did to all aspects of Chinese culture. And in New China, as the old physical education systems were reformed into those which serve the people, the foundation was quickly laid for China to develop into a powerful country in sports. Today millions of people take part in physical training through regular programmes in schools, factories, communes, army units, government offices, etc. and in specialized training programmes and institutions. By 1956, New China was able to produce its first world record holder — Chen Jingkai in weightlifting, who became the forerunner of some 10 million title-holding sportsmen (including some 5,000 Chinese “Masters of Sports”) who have broken over 200 world records and won 57 world championship titles. With general partici-

pation in sports activities throughout the country and with a fine contingent of Chinese sports men and women competing in all international games, the "sickmen of East Asia" have returned to good health.

From the beginning, the Chinese Communist Party and the government recognized the importance of physical culture and sports by adopting a series of measures to foster their sound development. Immediately after the founding of the People's Republic, the Party Central Committee issued a directive on "Strengthening the Work in Physical Culture and Sports for the People", and Chairman Mao Zedong wrote the inscription: "Promote physical culture; build up the people's health." Agencies were established at various levels, guiding policies set, and construction begun on sports facilities.

The encouragement of general participation in organized physical activities—including callisthenics, outdoor games, chess, the martial arts as well as other competitive sports—first of all improved the health standards for both the urban and rural populations. Among the new policies was a provision that office workers take two 10-minute breaks, in the morning and afternoon, for limbering-up exercises. Today with physical education an integral part of school curricula, more than 80 million young people and children have tested at the physical standard for their grade and age group.

The importance given athletic training is also shown in the establishment of 11 physical education institutes which over the years have turned out 28,000 graduates, and in the setting up of physical education departments in more than 110 teachers' colleges which have trained a large number of physical education teachers. These

have been joined by a number of national and regional physical culture research institutes now engaged in scientific research in physical education and training. The government has also financed the construction of stadiums and gymnasiums all over the country.

The increased number of sports facilities and general raising of physical education standards consequently raised the level of performance in competitive sports. In 1953, Wu Chuanyu became the first Chinese swimmer to win a gold medal in an international competition. In 1959, Rong Guotuan brought home to China its first international title by taking the men's singles at the 25th World Table Tennis Championships. After Chinese sportsmen in the mid-1950s had, as one newspaper described it, broken the "big duck's egg" — "0" — in international competition, they were followed through the barrier by an ever-increasing number of athletes bringing credit to the Chinese people. By 1966, over 100 Chinese athletes had broken world records in weightlifting, archery, shooting, track and field events, swimming, parachute jumping, model aeroplane competition, speed skating, mountaineering, etc. In the process, 15 of these athletes won 13 world titles. Another big event of the sixties was the first successful ascent up the northern slope of Mount Qomolangma, the world's highest peak, by a Chinese mountain climbing team.

Unfortunately during the period of the "cultural revolution" from 1966 to 1976 the advance of sports in China was brought to a standstill as the two counter-revolutionary cliques of Lin Biao and Jiang Qing tried to negate every achievement in sports and physical education since the founding of New China. Athletes were persecuted, sports organizations immobilized, and facilities

wrecked. The best years of many fine athletes were wasted, and many workers in the field of sports became victims of wanton persecution. The disruption of what had been a vigorously developing public sports programme brought about a drastic reduction in skills. The gap between Chinese and world standards in some items, which had been narrowed, widened again.

However after the fall of the Jiang Qing counter-revolutionary clique in October 1976, the Party and government worked hard to bring order out of chaos, and athletics recovered in less time than expected to make new headway. Policies for sports work became more flexible, opening even broader vistas in sports. New sports organizations were created and old ones reorganized on a sound basis; physical training and sports in schools resumed under improved standards; and sports activities among workers and peasants again assumed their vital role. Meanwhile, people began to organize themselves in all kinds of sports activities as the popularity of sports boomed. This included traditional sports such as *wushu* (martial arts) which began to be taken up by more and more people who recognized their value in promoting the health of the body and mind. Different *wushu* schools carried on the old traditions while making new developments. In this atmosphere, the skills of athletes improved so quickly that in the two and a half years from 1979, they set a pace unprecedented in Chinese sports: they broke 25 world records, won 22 world titles and took 598 gold medals in international competitions, 326 in 1980 alone. In the first half of 1981, the Chinese men's volleyball team rebounded from a two-game deficit to take the last three games to defeat the south Korean team and join the Chinese

women's team in victory at the Asian Zone World Cup Preliminaries — both qualifying to compete in the World Cup volleyball tournaments. In the 36th World Table Tennis Championships held in 1981, Chinese players put on a show of force unprecedented in 55 years of world table tennis championships by winning all the seven titles and taking the runner-up position in all the five individual events. They thus maintained the leading position China has held for 20 years in world table tennis. These brilliant athletic successes not only bring credit to the men and women who achieved them but have bolstered the spirit of the entire Chinese nation, particularly the young people who seek to emulate the hard work embodied in athletic achievement to build up their country. Among those making valuable contributions to the progress of sports in New China have been sports men and women from China's various nationalities, compatriots in Taiwan, Hongkong and Macao, and Chinese residents overseas.

In the past 30 years or more, Chinese athletes have had friendly contacts — some 4,000 involving an estimated 60,000 people — with over 120 other countries and regions. More than 150 Chinese instructors of 14 sports, including table tennis, badminton, volleyball, basketball and gymnastics, are currently working in 34 countries. These contacts have strengthened the friendship between the Chinese people and the people of other countries in the world and promoted sports at home which are avidly followed through news and television coverage.

Among China's sports publications are the magazine *New Sports*, the newspaper *Sports News*, and the English-edition magazine, *Chinese Sports*. The People's Physical Culture Publishing House has brought out some 168

million copies of books dedicated to sports since its founding.

Following the International Olympic Committee's restoration of China's legitimate rights in November 1979, China by the first half of 1981 had become a member country in 40 international sports organizations. Having entered the international arena, Chinese athletes are determined to intensify their training and improve their skills to compete with the best teams and strongest rivals in the world on a wider scale and at a higher level, "to excel in Asia and compete with the world".

At the same time, all those involved in sports in China — both officials and participants — can clearly see that New China must also work hard to close what is still a considerable gap between China and other countries in sports standards and education. New China still lags far behind in skills and levels in many individual sports. Looking forward, in the 1980s, Chinese sports workers will exert their utmost efforts to raise the general health standard of the nation, better the skills and levels of the various sports and contribute to China's socialist cultural development. Plans include making new progress in the sports activities of all people while concentrating on first developing public sports in the cities. More scientific training will produce an even stronger contingent of athletes who will be better equipped to achieve good scores in the Olympic Games, Asian Games and other major international competitions. Contacts with international sports organizations will be strengthened, and exchange in sports with other countries actively conducted so as to promote understanding and friendship between the Chinese people and peoples of other countries and to improve sports skills. Finally, sports activities

will be conducted as part of the cultural development programme, as part of the effort to inspire the people with high public moral principles, give vigour to the national spirit and enrich the people's cultural life.

**National Games Held in
the People's Republic of China**

<i>National Games</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Second</i>	<i>Third</i>	<i>Fourth</i>
Time	Sept. 13- Oct. 3, 1959	Sept. 11-28, 1965	Sept. 12-28, 1975	Sept. 15- 30, 1979
Place	Beijing	Beijing	Beijing	Beijing
No. of sports events	36	22	Adult 28 Junior 8	Adult 34 Junior 2
No. of group performances	6	1	6	1
No. of athletes participating	10,658	5,922	12,497	15,189
World records broken	4 records by 7 persons on 4 occasions	9 records by 24 persons on 10 occasions	3 records by 1 team and 4 persons on 6 occasions	8 records by 7 persons on 8 occasions (including 3 junior world records by 2 persons on 3 occasions)

World records equalled	—	—	2 records by 2 persons on 2 occasions	3 records by 3 persons on 3 occasions
National records broken	106 records by 664 persons on 884 occasions	130 records by 330 persons on 469 occasions	62 records by 49 teams and 83 persons on 197 occasions	102 records by 36 teams and 204 persons on 376 occasions
National junior records broken	—	—	58 records by 4 teams and 36 persons on 144 occasions	5 records by 2 teams and 6 persons on 10 occasions
Name of group callisthenics	<i>Nationwide Celebrations</i>	<i>Paeon to the Revolution</i>	<i>Song of the Red Flag</i>	<i>The New Long March</i>
No. of people participating in group callisthenics	8,000	16,000	23,000	16,000

Note: The group performance at the Fourth National Games was the large-scale callisthenics *The New Long March*.

SUCSESSES WON BY CHINESE ATHLETES IN 1980

As China resumed and developed its relations with more international sports organizations in 1980, the first year after China was restored to its legitimate rights on

the International Olympic Committee, Chinese athletes made more extensive international contacts. They participated for the first time in the Winter Olympic Games and in a number of other high-level international tournaments where they competed with the world's top teams and best athletes. The Chinese athletes, however, boycotted the Moscow Summer Olympic Games on account of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In 1980, Chinese sports men and women won many medals in international competitions. Among their honours were: 3 world titles in Table Tennis and Gymnastics World Cups; 22 junior titles in world college and secondary school students' competitions; 19 runners-up and 21 third places in 11 world tournaments; 290-plus first places in more than 60 Asian and other multi-national competitions. In national and international tournaments, Chinese athletes broke or surpassed 7 world records and equalled 3, and bettered a number of Asian records and many national records.

Chinese table tennis players continued to hold their leading position in the world, winning all the team titles in the 11 major international matches in which they participated. Chinese gymnastics, diving and men's and women's volleyball teams, which have been reinforced by newcomers and made fairly rapid progress in recent years, again proved themselves to be among the best in the world. In 11 major international competitions, Chinese gymnasts won 51 championship titles. The Chinese sports acrobatics team and women's chess team took part in international matches for the first time in 1980 and won notable successes. In military sports,

Chinese athletes broke or surpassed a number of world records in parachute jumping, aeroplane modelling and shooting in both national and international competitions.

Good results were achieved also in weightlifting and archery. Track and field and swimming, which had made little headway for more than 10 years, also began to pick up.

In 1980, Chinese athletes also obtained some successes and improved their skills in different degrees in competitions in badminton, men's basketball, tennis, hockey, handball, baseball, softball, ice hockey, speed skating, water polo, canoeing, boat race, *xiangqi* (Chinese chess) and *weiqi* (go).

**World Championships Won by Chinese
Athletes in 1980**

<i>Event</i>	<i>Winner</i>	<i>Tournament</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Place</i>
Men's singles	Guo Yaohua	First Table Tennis World Cup	Aug. 31	Hongkong
Men's parallel bars	Li Yuejiu	Gymnastics World Cup	Oct. 26	Toronto, Canada
Men's rings	Huang Yubin	Gymnastics World Cup	Oct. 26	Toronto, Canada